

BLACKFRIARS

FAITH THAT ILLUMINATES. Edited with an Introduction by V. A. Demant. (The Centenary Press; 3/6.)

This book contains six essays originally delivered as lectures by six members of the Anglo-Catholic body who set themselves to make a Christian pronouncement on current problems besetting various definite spheres of life or thought. Mr. T. S. Eliot treating of *Religion and Literature* expounds the need of criticizing literature not only in relation to literary but also to Christian doctrinal principles. Literature of whatever kind, light literature even more effectually than "serious," must inevitably influence the whole mind of a reader, by the challenge of a particular judgment on life or human behaviour which it will always contain. Modern literature, or at least modern fiction literature, has this further menace that it brings to bear on us not the separate challenge of individual minds but the weight of a mass mind formed by the degrading assumptions of naturalism. ("To the third phase, in which we are living, belong nearly all contemporary novelists except Mr. James Joyce. It is the phase of those who have never heard the Christian Faith spoken of as anything but an anachronism.") For safety he prescribes not the taking of flight but the taking of thought: in finding out first what we like in literature, next what according to Christian principles we ought to like, and then in strenuously criticizing everything we read. Anybody found jeering at the author of *The Waste Land* (so the jeerer would probably put it) for his confession concerning the writings of D. H. Lawrence: "I am not even sure that I have not had some pernicious influence myself," we shall be prompt to mark out as a victim of the modern mass movement.

The Rev. W. G. Peck dealing with *Religion and Economics* represents the failure of the Industrial system as the inevitable outcome of the inhuman principle on which the system is run, the assumption namely that economics have sacred laws and claims of their own to which man must be subordinated. Christianity alone with its true doctrine of man's spiritual and super-natural dignity and destiny can bring about the needed transformation of the system; Bolshevism and Fascism leave its basis undisturbed. The thesis is not a new one, but it is important and is here presented with a fine forcefulness.

The lengthiest contribution and probably the most important is Mr. M. B. Reckitt's *Religion and Politics*. He treats of the right balance in the relations between Church and State, describes the emergence of the Totalitarian State which would dissolve the Christian Church out of zeal for a new-found religion of its own, and then lest we should yield to an unrighteous indignation he represents this new State as a nemesis on three evils of which we

REVIEWS

and our fathers have been guilty: a spirit of egotism and greed in social and economic life; a corrupt spirit of Toleration ("bred by deadlock out of exhaustion") leading to scepticism and despair, thriving on a false Democracy and Liberalism; and finally the failure of religion to be effectively totalitarian upon its own plane. He points out the danger of Christians resisting the new evils only to fall back upon the old.

In a lecture on *Religion and Leisure* the Rev. P. E. T. Widdrington would convince us that we are destined soon to enter upon a new age of universal wealth and leisure (outcome of the Power as distinct from the Machine Age), and we are exhorted to prepare ourselves, or anyhow our children, to avoid the dangers and seize the opportunities of such new conditions. Even though we might judge the forecast to be unlikely, his lecture would still be of more than academic interest.

It must be admitted, however reluctantly, that in the two brief final lectures on *Religion and Philosophy* and *Religion and Morals* by Lord Justice Slessor and Mr. R. Ellis Roberts the light begins to fail and to fume.

The editor, the Rev. V. A. Demant, writes an Introduction in which he underlines some of the arguments of his contributors and drives home the moral. The book is one to make us both glad and regretful.

RICHARD KEHOE, O.P.

REVOLUTION, CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN? By Gabriel Gillett. (Church Literature Association; 1/-.)

It is gratifying to meet with this stimulating contribution to the study of Social Philosophy. It is inspired by the general sense that we seem to be passing through a period of such far-reaching change in every department of social life as can only be described by the word "revolution" (p. 13). Yet to call this period of change "revolution" is misleading since this term connotes the use of force in the overthrow of an established government. The present period is but a return of that everlasting problem: the relationship of the individual to the State. And since social philosophy is the study of the nature and laws of society it must begin with defining the mutual relationship of the individual and society. If our attitude towards this problem is based on totalitarian principles as exemplified in Communism, Fascism and Nazism, then the individual is completely subordinated to the collectivity. He is simply a wheel in a gigantic machine, discharging a particular function and thereby contributing to the efficient working of the State. The whole individual, his religion, education, art, must subserve the efficiency of the State and its leaders. Even the standards of morality in accordance with which the value of all actions is assessed, are adapted to the